

Fort Sam Houston National Historic Landmark
San Antonio Quartermaster Depot (Quadrangle, Building #16)
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3303-1

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Parks Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

SAN ANTONIO QUARTERMASTER DEPOT
(The Quadrangle, Building #16)

HABS No. TX-3303-1

Location: At the northwest corner of New Braunfels Avenue and Grayson Street, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner and Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Administrative Offices, Fifth Army Headquarters

Significance: The Quartermaster Depot, built of locally quarried stone on land donated by the City of San Antonio, was the first permanent Military Post at San Antonio. Completed in 1878, the depot replaced a smaller supply depot that had been housed at the Alamo.

This monumental structure, now the headquarters for the U.S. Fifth Army, served as the headquarters of the Department of Texas as well as a supply depot when first completed. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places July 30, 1974 and declared a National Historic Landmark the following year.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Begun in 1876, completed in 1878; officially occupied by Department of Texas, December 22, 1879.
2. Architect: Quartermaster General's Office, Washington, D.C., Montgomery C. Meigs, Quartermaster General. Captain George W. Davis, Supervisor of project, was responsible for modifying the plan to suit the site.
3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Army from date of construction to the present.
4. Builder, Contractor: Braden and Angus, Contractors, San Antonio, Texas. An excerpt from the November 2, 1876 issue of the San Antonio Express states: "Messrs. Braden and Angus confidently expect to turn the work over completed by the last of April (1877). Mr. Angus has been a long time contracting on government work and thoroughly understands his business. He has the whole work to look after and is putting up a good job. Mr. Braden attends to the outside business, looks after the quarry and is constantly on the move."

5. Original plan and construction: (See Section D: Supplemental Material). In the early design stages, a report was issued by Montgomery Meigs on May 12, 1875, stating that attempts were being made "to incorporate the good qualities of the Jeffersonville Depot as a model for San Antonio's plan". (Note: The Jeffersonville Depot was located near Madison, Indiana).

When construction began the next year, locally quarried limestone from quarries only a mile or two away was used as the principal building material.

The depot was built as a four-sided quadrangular structure with an inner courtyard. The south front has two stories, housing administrative offices on the second story. A Sallyport entrance is at the center of this facade. Attached wings along the east and west sides of the courtyard were single-story supply storerooms. The north wall was a simple stone buttressed wall with attached frame structures of varying functions (including a blacksmith and wheelwright shop). Several frame structures have been added and/or removed to this wall over the years. One early report stated that "the Quadrangle originally comprised of thirty-six storerooms, twenty offices and extensive workshops and a cellar. (Corner, William, San Antonio de Bexar)

The storeroom doors on the east and west wings and the first-floor south were all utilitarian, frame doors. The south second story office level was originally an open balcony. As originally built, there were no exterior door or window openings on the Quadrangle; only small barred segmental arched openings for ventilation.

6. Alterations and additions: On August 21, 1886, a hurricane struck San Antonio, causing substantial damage to the storehouse and tower of the less-than-ten-year-old quadrangle. Federal funds were allocated for the rebuilding.

The most notable alterations occurred c. 1920 when construction was completed on 37 new permanent government-owned warehouses, an office building and a gasoline filling station at another site on Post. Prior to this, Post supplies were furnished from the Quartermaster Depot at the Quadrangle. At this time, the Quadrangle was vacated as a depot and made over into offices for Post staff.

It is probable that it was at this time that the exterior barred ventilation openings were dropped to standard length and glazed. At this time also, the second floor arched balconies on either side of the Sallyport were enclosed with glass. The balcony area just above the interior Sallyport opening has since been enclosed with vertical plywood boards and aluminum frame, double-hung sash windows.

Interior alterations to accommodate office use significantly altered the supply depot's appearance. Subsequent remodelings with change in floor plan, dropped ceilings and tile floors have left little of the depot's original appearance.

In 1977, major rehabilitation work was conducted on the exterior stonework; air saws and air hammers removed deteriorated mortar; high pressure water was used to clean stonework; old mortar joints were tuck-pointed and loose stone facing was removed and replaced; and finally, a clear liquid waterproof coating was applied over the masonry surface.

B. Historical Context:

1. On September 10, 1886, Captain A. M. Lawton and his troops brought Geronimo, his son Chappa, Chief Natchez (son of Cochise), and thirty other Apache Indians to the Quadrangle from Arizona where Geronimo had surrendered under terms that "they were to be sent with their families to Florida." They remained here until October 22, 1886 and then were taken to Fort Pickens, Florida. Two years later, Geronimo and fourteen others were moved to Alabama, then finally transferred to Fort Sill, Oklahoma where he died.
2. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, the depot outfitted and supplied the "Rough Riders," under the command of Colonel Leonard Wood and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Quadrangle, while modified for administrative office use on the interior, still retains much of its original exterior appearance. Built of locally quarried limestone, its simply yet finely detailed Sallyport entrance, dressed limestone lintels above each window and doorway, and

corner quoinage are its most notable details. Designed in the 1870s by the Quartermaster General's Office, Washington, D.C. under the direction of Montgomery C. Meigs, this monumental building, uniform in its design and materials, provides an excellent example of Military Post architecture during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

2. Condition of Fabric: Excellent; the Quadrangle, as the original building on Post, has been well maintained and minimally altered on the exterior; interior spaces have been altered considerably.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: The Quadrangle, a four-sided structure with central courtyard, occupies approximately nine acres. The interior courtyard contains approximately seven and a half acres. The one-story east and west walls are each 37 bays long on the exterior of the Quadrangle, and measure approximately 645 feet. The front south exterior wall has 26 window bays at second story level (first floor bays have more erratic placement) and the rear north buttressed wall is 30 bays long. These walls are approximately 655 feet long.
2. Foundations: The foundations were constructed of rubble limestone and the original specifications called for "Foundation walls to commence at least 18 inches below the natural surface...27 inches thick at base of large stone...between the entire length, one course of slate is to be laid".
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The wall is constructed of randomly laid gray limestone block.
4. Structural system, framing: The walls are masonry load-bearing walls and the original specifications called for "all walls above water table to be 18" thick, except division walls of office building which will be one foot thick". Many interior walls, however, measure 18" as well.
5. Porches, stoops and bulkheads: Old views of the interior south, two-story Quadrangle wall show an original second story open balcony-like feature which has since been enclosed with glazed openings.
6. Chimneys: Twelve major interior chimneys are evenly spaced along the south exterior wall of the Quadrangle, projecting above the roofline with simple corbelled caps and arched, metal flashing stack covers.

Large cylindrical metal air vents are spaced along the east and west wings, projecting from the gable roofs.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: A prominent Sallyport entrance in the middle south wall provides entrance to the central courtyard. The Sallyport is a segmentally arched opening with a keystone and surrounding limestone voussoirs. The keystone is inscribed with the legend "San Antonio Depot" and the date 1876. This was the only entrance to the original structure.

Doors off the center courtyard are set in massive archways with keystones, with sidelights and blocked-off fanlights. These arched openings originally had hinged storage doors.

- b. Windows: Windows on the courtyard are 6/6 double-hung sash squared off in segmental arch openings. Those on the exterior have three-pane transoms above the 6/6 windows on the first floor. Lintels are of dressed limestone with hammered keystones. Sills are also of dressed limestone. On the second-story south interior, the original triple arched openings are now glazed at each end of the south wall. The center of the second story has been insensitively enclosed with plywood and 1/1 double-hung aluminum sash windows.

North buttressed wall has small segmental-arch openings.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The south, east, and west sides of the Quadrangle have simple gable roofs of varying pitch, covered with green asbestos shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The cornice is a simple frame molding with a slight overhang and a 6" fascia board. Gable end returns are found on the south wall wing additions and in the northeast and northwest corners at the rear gates. Venting is found in the soffit of the east and west one-story sides of the Quadrangle on both the interior and exterior courtyard cornices.

C. Description of Interior:

The interior features of the original Quadrangle have been considerably altered in the conversion of this original storehouse/depot into administrative offices. Most offices along the east and west sides are interconnecting with interior doorways. Offices vary in treatment to accommodate various functions.

The second floor interior space in the south portion is probably the most intact, since it has always functioned as office space. A two-run stairway with turned balusters is at the center of the south end to the west side of the Sallyport. Many original dividing office walls remain — noticeable because of their width, and because of the finely paneled woodwork on doorheads and jambs. Some original column supports and original beaded board ceilings are visible, although ceilings are primarily dropped panels.

East and west end stairways on the south wall are very simple, with beaded board along stairwell walls.

The building is heated by a central steam heating system. Air-conditioning was installed as early as 1948.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Quadrangle is located on the northwest corner of New Braunfels Avenue and Grayson Street with the main entrance on Grayson Street.

The interior of the Quadrangle is now maintained in a park-like setting with wildlife running freely. The clock tower (HABS No. TX-3303-2) stands at the center of the Quadrangle. Later, prominent light blue water towers (scheduled to be removed) are located in the northeast quadrant of the Quadrangle.

2. Outbuildings: While many temporary structure have stood within the center of the Quadrangle over the years, most have been removed. Along the north interior wall, however, utility buildings T-70 and T-20 (of yellow brick and wood frame construction) still remain.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

Center for Cartographic and Architectural Archives, Record Group 77, Miscellaneous Forts Files, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. (This group also contains specifications.)

B. Old Views:

Views of Fort Sam Houston, 92F-56, Audio-Visual Archives, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. (Reference Numbers 1, 14, 18 and 20, Miscellaneous Old Views, and additional photos taken by George R. Adams, National Park Service, September, 1974).

Fort Sam Houston Military Museum, Building #123, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Historical data on San Antonio and Fort Sam Houston held at the San Antonio Public Library, main branch, gift of Colonel M.L. Crimmins.

Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Consolidated Correspondence Files, 1794-1915. Microfilm reel from the National Archives, Washington, D.C. held at Fort Sam Houston Post Library, San Antonio, Texas.

Real Property Records, Directorate of Facilities Engineering, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

Miscellaneous pamphlets, reports and press releases held at the Fifth Army Public Information Office, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas.

Orchard, Elizabeth, The History of the Development of Fort Sam Houston, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin.

"The Quadrangle," a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, approved July 30, 1974.

2. Secondary and Published Sources:

Corner, William, San Antonio de Bexar, San Antonio: Bainbridge and Corner, 1890.

Holman, Andrea Cheryl, Army History of San Antonio and Fort Sam Houston, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Texas Technical University, 1973.

Handy, Mary Olivia, A History of Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Naylor Inc., 1951.

Gould, Stephen, The Alamo City Guide, San Antonio, Texas: Being a Historical Sketch of the Ancient City of The Alamo and Business Review, New York: McGowan and Slipper, 1882.

Steinfeldt, Cecilia, San Antonio Was, San Antonio Museum Association, 1978.

Kindervater, Major E.A., Q.M.C. Fort Sam Houston, Texas: 1876-1936, Unpublished booklet, 1936. (San Antonio Public Library).

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Correspondence and other miscellaneous files relating to Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas. National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

E. Supplemental Material:

A 1882 quote by Stephen Gould describes the appearance of the Quadrangle during its first years of use:

"The Quartermaster Depot and headquarters buildings covers four sides of a square six hundred and twenty-four feet, outside measurement...the walls are very thick, with rock foundations and the whole work is of the most massive character. The south front wall is two stories in height, second story being devoted to the offices of the Department officers and their clerks...the enclosed space which is nearly seven and one-half acres in size is tastefully laid out in beautiful grass plots and gravelled driveways and cement walks. There are two small basins or ponds fed by pretty little fountains, numerous beautiful trees are planted at intervals, and in the center is the lookout tower".

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The detailed survey of eighteen (18) architecturally representative structures, and a group of streetscapes, at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, was undertaken in 1980 by the National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER) after a comprehensive inventory of the Post was conducted. Funding for the project was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Department of the Army, Fort Sam Houston, and the San Antonio Conservation Society.

This project was under the general supervision of Kenneth Anderson, Acting Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the National Architectural and Engineering Record. Sally Tompkins of the NAER staff was project supervisor. Project Historian was Kathryn A. Burns, San Antonio, Texas. Photographic records were provided by David Kaminsky, Roswell, New Mexico.

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ADDENDUM TO

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service
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